

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NHDOT BUILDS TEST SIDEWALK FOR WINTER RESEARCH PROJECT
TO ASSESS PRODUCTS USED TO AID THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

A research project across the street from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation headquarters in Concord will help determine which product or products currently on the market are most appropriate for a sidewalk curb ramp application in New Hampshire's winter conditions.

In cooperation with the City of Concord, a 75-yard long pre-cast concrete test sidewalk is being constructed on state property alongside Hazen Drive near the intersection with Loudon Road. As many as eight different products designed to assist the visually impaired will be tested to determine how they handle ice and snow and how they respond to repeated plowing. Once the sidewalk is in place, the City of Concord has agreed to plow it on a regular basis to assist with the research.

The sidewalk products all utilize patterns of raised bumps, or truncated domes, to alert visually impaired persons that they have reached a point where a sidewalk curb ramp meets a designated crosswalk. The applications of the products vary to address new construction versus retrofitting an existing ramp. Materials used in the products range from plastic and rubber to brick and concrete.

"We are trying to choose the best product that will provide the best service life and be safe at the same time," says Bob Barry, Administrator of the NHDOT's Bureau of Municipal Highways, who is overseeing the project. Barry says the results of the tests will be passed along to cities and towns across New Hampshire for their review and consideration for possible use.

The two-foot strips of truncated domes on sidewalk ramps leading to crosswalks are a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All of the materials being tested have met the federal product requirements for this usage. However, they lack sufficient documentation that assesses their performance in winter climate and maintenance conditions.

A crew from the NHDOT's Bureau of Bridge Maintenance is building the test sidewalk. Also contributing to the project is the Bureau of Materials and Research.

- 30 -